

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF WATERTOWN
April 11, 2016
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Joseph M. Butler, Jr. Presiding

Present: Council Member Cody J. Horbacz
Council Member Stephen A. Jennings
Council Member Teresa R. Macaluso
Council Member Mark C. Walczyk

Also Present: Sharon Addison, City Manager

City staff present: Erin Gardner, Justin Wood, Michael Lumbis

DISCUSSION

Grant Opportunities

Mayor Butler started the discussion by introducing Leann West of Strategic Development Specialists. Ms. West addressed Council with updates for grant opportunities that are available for the City. The first topic discussed was the NYS Water Grant. She pointed out that the topic was discussed at the April 4th Council Meeting at which time the Bond Ordinance for the Sludge Modification project at the sewage treatment plant amount was approved. She confirmed that the total project cost is just under \$ 9.3 million. The program that the City applied to is through New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC). She pointed out that in this program the City is eligible for up to 25% of the total project cost in grant funding. The remainder of the project cost would be covered in a 0% interest loan. She stated that she needed to verify if it is a 30 year or 40 year term. She informed Council that the City qualifies under EFC hardship status in which case demographics, population, income levels and poverty levels are taken into consideration. She explained that originally the program had \$75 million across the state for all projects and there was additional funding allocated in the budget that was recently passed in NYS. She indicated that the application is due on Friday April 15th. She said that all the supporting documentation has been submitted to EFC. She told Council that she has a conference call tomorrow with the regional program director who has reviewed the application materials that were put together for the City. She added that everything should be finalized and submitted by Wednesday, April 13th.

Council Member Macaluso asked how long it will take to get an answer back.

Ms. West explained that last year was the first year this program was available. She summarized that applications were due the same time and that decisions were made in June.

Council Member Walczyk asked if there is anything Council can do to help the process along.

Ms. West remarked that the next step is to put together support letters. She noted that Mike Sligar Water Superintendant provided her with an initial list. She summarized that she will draft the support letters and told Council that if there is any assistance they could offer in collecting the letters and reaching out to people would be helpful.

Mayor Butler asked if the support letters are required at the same time as the application deadline.

Ms. West replied that they will be accepted in after the deadline.

Ms. Addison informed Council that the majority of the users go through the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC).

Mayor Butler summarized reaching out to Senators and Congresswoman.

Ms. West informed Council that there are several upcoming opportunities and that some of them were recently finalized in the budget. She explained that the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) is particularly of interest to the City. She summarized that across the state there is \$100million available and that \$10 million will be allocated to one community in each of the regional Economic Development Council areas including the North Country. She added there are some guidelines regarding demographics and certain program requirements that the Governor's office and the department of state is looking to achieve. She summarized that some of the guidelines include having connections to anchor institutions, walkability, signage, access to waterfront, parks, and trails and job creation. She highlighted that she believes the City is in a good position to compete for the funds.

Council Member Macaluso pointed out that she went to the State website and found it to be very vague.

Ms. West said she thinks it would be wise to come up with some concepts that the City would like to achieve through the program adding that job creation should be a priority and that it has to be tied to private investment. The State is looking for a 5 to 1 investment ratio and is focusing on connections to anchor institution such as JCC, Samaritan Medical Center, Fort Drum and how they might benefit from the DRI. Ms. West then summarized that a comprehensive plan for the DRI needs to be put in place.

Council Member Jennings asked if the planning process would take place after the award.

Ms. West explained that the initial award is being the chosen community so the planning would take place after the community is chosen.

Mayor Butler summarized that Council has to present good reasons why the City needs the grant and stressed that there is competition mentioning Saranac Lake, Plattsburgh and Potsdam as examples.

Council Member Macaluso said she would like to see something put downtown that will attract people. She stressed that the problem with downtown is a staggered mix of shops. Suggested having some type of outlet mall downtown.

Council Member Horbacz expressed concern with the traffic downtown and the challenge of pedestrians crossing 6 lanes of traffic.

Council Member Macaluso summarized that she does not think it is a challenge to cross and it has been suggested to her that one whole side of the square should be closed and have it covered up. She suggested closing the north side of the square.

Council Member Jennings added that it has been suggested to him to close the entire square making it a more walker friendly environment and it might attract business to the area.

Ms. West said there are still a lot more details to come out with this particular program. She then summarized that every year the NYS Archives have opportunities through their local government Records Management Improvement fund. This year it came out in March, she stated that the City just missed the deadline for that. She added that a meeting with the regional program contact is set for the April 22nd. At this time a meeting will take place to prepare for an application for the next available funding round which should be late spring or next winter. She then explained to Council that the Consolidated Funding Application includes many different funding opportunities from various NYS agencies. She summarized the different options Empire State Development offers.

Ms. West explained to Council what the Green Innovation Grant Program is and that many municipalities are interested in this program. The grant funds 90% of the project and the municipality is responsible for the remaining 10%.

Arena Naming Rights

Erin Gardner, Parks and Recreation Superintendent, presented a slide show for Council regarding suggestions for the naming and signage for the Arena. Ms. Gardner told Council that there is a team working on the project which consists of herself, Purchasing Manager Amy Pastuff, City Engineer Justin Wood, City Planner Michael Lumbis, City Manager Sharon Addison and Scott Weller. She explained that they have had several meetings and everyone has helped out by doing research for the power point presentation. She told Council that the group recommended a \$25,000 per year minimum bid with a minimum of 10 years. She said that one of the main things that needs to be addressed is if Watertown should be in the name of the Arena. She pointed out that the group did some research and noted there was not one sports complex that had the name of the city in it. She gave examples of Buffalo's, arena being called First Niagara Center, Albany's Time Union Center, Queens Citi Field arena, East Rutherford, NJ's Metlife Stadium and Rochester's Blue Cross Arena.

Council Member Macaluso asked Ms. Gardner if she knew how much people donated to the arenas and would like clarification on the cost of the projects.

Ms. Gardner said she did not know, she was using them as examples. She also pointed out that they are not all municipal complexes.

Ms. Gardner explained that the arena costs and or fees for naming rights were not tied to the cost of the entire arena.

Council Member Macaluso Expressed concern that she needs clarification before she can vote. She wants to know that some of the burden will be taken off the taxpayer. She feels that \$250,000 over 10 years is not a lot of income.

Ms. Addison responded by explaining that \$25,000 is better than nothing. She explained that she asked Ms. Gardner to keep her research to NY municipalities so there is a better understanding of what the cities in NYS are charging.

Ms. Gardner clarified that as a team they do not think Watertown should be in the name. She

told Council that zoning regulations are limited to 200 square feet of signage per parcel. She pointed out that some of the suggested exterior locations for the signs are above the main entrance (west side), on the south side of Arena, a sign above the north side entrance and a sign below the digital marquee. She summarized using examples of some local signs such as the Home Depot sign which is 250 square feet and pointed out how well it can be seen from Coffeen Street and Route 81. She added that the Walgreens sign on Arsenal Street is 75 Square Feet. She explained that it is possible to have a 100 square foot sign on the front of the Arena and then a different size one on the side of arena. She mentioned that City Assessor Brian Phelps is working on a plan to separate the parcels to a Fairgrounds parcel and an Arena parcel.

Ms. Gardner highlighted the suggested interior locations for signs which consisted of the curved wall in the lobby, the stairwell, the reception area, above the concession stand and pointed out there could also be signage on the rugs and pillars and even on the ice rink. Ms. Gardner also added that currently the Watertown Wolves have rights to advertise in the center ice and she recommends letting the Wolves keep that right but would also like to put a clause in their agreement stating that whoever wins the naming rights will have a 10 x10 foot spot in the ice for their naming rights. She added that the 250 square feet rule only applies to the outside of the Arena and that there are no regulations for the inside. She pointed out that this does not mean that someone can have an extra large sign that overpowers the others but it needs to be kept up to standards with the Arena. She told Council that other marketing opportunities for the naming rights owner could be on the website, tickets and Arena letterhead. She stressed to Council that what needs to be addressed immediately is agreeing with the \$25,000 minimum bid, agreeing with the 10 year term and if Council concurs with leaving Watertown out of the requirements for the signage.

Mayor Butler asked how the group came up with the \$25,000 minimum.

Ms. Gardner explained that she and the Purchasing Manager did research on different municipalities. She told Council they can put whatever amount they want for a minimum bid, \$25,000 was just a suggestion but expressed concern that if no one bids on it they will be back to square one.

Council Member Macaluso agreed with Ms.Gardner that they have to have a number that is reasonable.

Council Member Walczyk asked if there are any prospects.

Ms. Gardner said she could not name the prospects but there were 5 of them so far, with 2 of them being viable.

Council Member Horbacz said he would like to see Watertown be put in the sign.

Council Member Jennings stated that he does not agree with making the bidder put Watertown in their sign.

Ms. Gardner asked Council if they agree on the \$25,000 minimum bid.

Council Member Walczyk said he thinks it is too low and suggested \$100,000 after doing research on arenas through out the country. Ms. Gardner pointed out that the size of the City makes a difference.

Council Member Horbacz mentioned that being so close to Canada and with the impact of Fort Drum he suggested \$75,000 a year.

Ms. Gardner said she would like to see that also but expressed concern about how they present the first time minimum bid.

Council Member Macaluso asked what will happen if two people bid on the \$25,000 amount.

Ms. Gardner explained that it is a Request For Proposal (RFP) and that staff and Council would make the final decision.

Ms. Gardner summarized the topic by confirming that Council agreed on \$50,000 a year with a 5 year term and an option to renew.

Mayor Butler stated he agreed with that. She then clarified if she had Council's approval to leave Watertown out of the naming rights, Council confirmed they agreed. She then told Council she will provide them with a report at the next Council meeting in May to let them know the progress that has been made.

Work session ended at 8:20 p.m.

Margaret M Puccia
Deputy City Clerk